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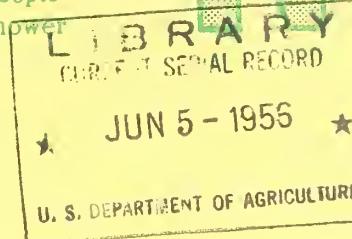
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RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

"We must open wider the doors of opportunity....
for the good of our country and all our people"

President Eisenhower

U. S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.



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No. 8

This is a special issue of the Rural Development Program NEWS, describing the experience of leaders in three typical pilot counties as they plan and organize for long-term economic development and move forward, using resources they have at hand. Monroe County, Ohio; Hardin, Tennessee; and Choctaw, Oklahoma are included in this report.

County programs described here are outstanding. They show the Rural Development Program idea at work. But local effort and imaginative leadership to make these programs successful are matched in many other counties named as demonstration areas by State committees. Leaders in these counties are striving for total development -- farm-home improvement, new job opportunities, better training and education, better health -- in short, the whole pattern of economic betterment.

Twenty-six States have now made a start on the Rural Development Program. State-wide committees have been formed in most of them; pilot counties have been designated in 19 States. There is continuing close liaison between Federal and State agencies, and planning for increased future work.

NEWS

On May 14 the House of Representatives passed an appropriation for the Department of Agriculture which included funds for the Rural Development Program. Although several reductions were made in Department of Agriculture requests for this purpose, the House by its action gave support to many of the education and research services which are basic to the program. The Senate has still to consider the Agriculture appropriation. Final action is not expected before June.

The Department of Interior has joined other departments of the Federal Government that are participating in the Rural Development Program, and is now represented on the principal committee giving direction to the program.

On May 9 Under Secretary True D. Morse met with the Under Secretaries of Commerce; Labor; Health, Education, and Welfare; Assistant Secretary of Interior; and a member of the President's Council of Economic Advisers. They discussed Rural Development Program planning and effective cooperation between departments and agencies having a role in the program.

PREPARING FOR INDUSTRY ---

A MAJOR CHANGE

People in Monroe County, Ohio, recognized the need for coordinated town-country improvement long before the State Rural Development Committee named their county as a demonstration area in the program.

Monroe, located in Southeastern Ohio and with a population of about 15,000, has had an organized program of area development since 1953, soon after Howard Phillips was appointed county agent. In 1954, work leading to community improvement was brought under direction of a Rural Planning and Improvement Committee. County-wide surveys of needs and resources, including industry opportunity, provided planning data for the committee.

It was found that about 4,000 people were available for work of all kinds, skilled and unskilled. More than half the farmers worked off their farms part of the time, and some of them traveled up to 80 miles a day to gain extra income through these jobs. The big problem has been to get industry into the county, and provide work for those who have to travel long distances at present and others who want to stay in the county and earn an adequate living.

Many farms in Monroe are too small to produce full-time earnings for their operators. Soils are low in certain minerals, and much of the land doesn't lend itself to mechanization. Financial aid, improved farm and home management, opportunities for the young people -- all are pressing needs.

The Ohio Rural Development Committee designated Monroe as a pilot county because of the farming situation in the county, and perhaps just as important, the enterprise and spirit expressed by the people in recent years. State leaders in the program have met several times with Mr. Phillips and other county leaders to discuss future development work. Increasingly, all agencies, both agricultural and non-agricultural, are tying their operations together in the general development program.

Now the people of Monroe are looking toward construction of a 90 million dollar aluminum plant, which a major company plans to put in the county. This industry will give work to 2,000 people. There will be a major upsurge in income.

Although bringing badly needed economic change to the area, industrialization will also create a whole set of new problems. The county Rural Development Committee and agency leaders working with it have put their minds to the agricultural, welfare, health, and community planning problems that will grow out of this change. Solving such problems, they believe, is part of the whole development effort.

**EMPHASIS ON HEALTH,
EDUCATION,
AND WELFARE**

Health, sanitation, welfare, and educational needs, as well as farm-home development, are of primary concern to leaders in the Hardin County, Tennessee Rural Development Program.

Population has been dropping since 1900, and county people continue to move steadily out of farming. (There are 300 less farms than in 1949.) More than 50 percent of the county is timberland that has been harvested in the past with little regard for selective cutting. Health and sanitation are below standard, and many of the children suffer from malnutrition.

In the short time since Hardin was brought into the Tennessee Rural Development Program, local leaders working with the State committee have prepared detailed plans and made a start on the difficult, extensive job of bringing economic and social stability to the county.

At a recent meeting with the State committee in Knoxville, they unveiled a "Tentative Plan for Rural Development Program in Hardin County." Describing the county situation, objectives of a program, and problems to be met, authors of the report point out, "the greatest problems are those primarily caused by the lack of educational development and opportunities for an adequate income." They list, point by point, what might be done immediately and in the long run to improve living in the county.

The county committee believes it necessary to promote more cooperation between groups in the community, to impress on everyone the importance of continuing economic improvements, to make certain changes in agency regulations that will permit needed assistance and self-help.

Practical work, now being started, can help bring about these and other fundamental changes. The committee's plan describes what can be done in education, counseling, health, nutrition, and other fields within a reasonable time. Special attention to chronic problems, new guidance programs, and more cooperation are the basic weapons.

Mr. Con Welch, chairman of the county committee, and his associates are providing dynamic leadership for the program in Hardin. The Tennessee Extension Service has employed an additional assistant agent for the county.

Every rural county in the Nation that is struggling with economic problems of adjustment to change and the need for meeting agricultural and industrial competition will profit from the experience of counties like Hardin.

PRACTICAL ORGANIZATION
BASED ON
RESPONSIBILITY

Choctaw County is representative of many counties in Southeastern Oklahoma. It was one of the first Rural Development Program pilot areas named by the State committee.

In 1949 Choctaw had 2,100 farms; in 1954 this number had dropped to around 1,600. Most of these farms are small, producing cotton or corn and other feed grains, vegetables for the farm table, limited quantities of milk for sale. Per capita income in the county is about \$400 a year.

Four Rural Development Committees are at work, coordinating county-wide participation:

1. An Agriculture committee, dealing with forestry, dairying, beef cattle, swine, poultry, field crops, and soil conservation.
2. An Industry committee, responsible for expanding old industry and encouraging new.
3. A Health and Welfare committee, now organizing a county-wide health council to reach more people.
4. A Religion and Education committee.

As initial action, program leaders started a survey in order to get exact data on economic and human resources in the county. One objective is to find out what technical and financial help farmers need, and whether they are willing to manage additional credit. This survey is under administrative direction of Oklahoma A. and M. College. The Agriculture committee has also obtained the services of an additional agent to give technical assistance to small farmers and those who work part-time off their farms.

Industry development given impetus and direction by county people working together is not new in Choctaw. In 1954 they built a factory which was leased rent-free to a glove-making company. Skilled workers in Choctaw contributed their labor to the building, and local businessmen raised the needed cash. In return, the company guaranteed to increase its payroll over a period of years by ten times the building cost. With this success already on record, Choctaw County people are pushing industrialization as part of the whole new development program.

County leaders have had excellent cooperation from local newspaper and radio stations, which provide continuing coverage and comment on the program. People in Choctaw already know what a cooperative, well-coordinated approach can accomplish.